

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L BERLIN 6734

E.O.11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, GE, UR, US, CH

SUBJECT: FAREWELL LUNCHEON GIVEN BY SOVIET AMBASSADOR ABRASIMOV

1. AMBASSADOR ABRSSIMOV WAS MY HOST AT LUNCH AT THE SOVIET EMBASSY IN EAST BERLIN SEPTEMBER 17. SOVIET MINISTER-COUNSELOR GROMYKO, A SOVIET EMBASSY INTERPRETER, AND MR. PARKER OF THE EMBASSY STAFF WERE ALSO PRESENT. THE FOLLOWING IS AN ACCOUNT OF OUR DISCUSSION.

US POLICY ON USSR

2. IN A THEME TO WHICH HE ADVERTED SEVERAL TIMES, ABRASIMOV SAID THAT US POLICY TOWARD THE USSR HAD BECOME HARDER IN RECENT MONTHS. EARLIER, THE ADMINISTRATION HAD ANNOUNCED ITS INTENTION TO REACH AN ARMS CONTROL AGREEMENT BEFORE THE US ELECTION, BUT THIS APPEARS NO LONGER TO BE THE US
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INTENTION. I REPLIED THAT IT IS THE POLICY OF THE US TO

PURSUE MUTUALLY IMPROVED RELATIONS WITH THE USSR AND TO REACH AGREEMENT ON STRATEGIC ARMS LIMITATION. AS HE KNEW, ANY PROSPECT OF NUCLEAR CONFLICT WOULD BE DEVASTATING TO ALL AND THERE IS NO PRACTICAL ALTERNATIVE TO ARMS CONTROL. GOOD RELATIONS BETWEEN THE US AND THE USSR ARE NOT ONLY IN THE INTEREST OF OUR TWO COUNTRIES, BUT THE WORLD.

3. DISCUSSING THE MIG-25 CASE (REPORTED IN BERLIN 6711) ABRASIMOV ALSO ALLUDED TO A HARDENING OF US POLICY. AS A RESPONSE TO HIS REMARKS ABOUT HARDENING OF US POLICY, I RESPONDED THAT HE KNEW EVENTS HAD OCCURRED IN THE COURSE OF US/SOVIET RELATIONS WHICH COULD BE CONSIDERED AS A HARDENING OF THE OTHER COUNTRY'S POLICY(I HAD SPOKEN IN PREVIOUS MEETINGS OF THE ADVERSE US OPINION TO SOVIET ACTION IN ANGOLA). HE THEN BACKED OFF SOMEWHAT AND NOTED THAT THE AGREEMENTS THAT HAD BEEN REACHED BY THE US AND THE SOVIET UNION WERE GOOD AND SPOKE FOR THEMSELVES.

US POLITICAL SITUATION

4. ABRASIMOV ASKED FOR MY ASSESSMENT OF THE POLITICAL SITUATION IN THE US. I DESCRIBED THE CURRENT SITUATION IN GENERAL TERMS, INCLUDING THE RESULTS OF RECENT POLLS, AND DESCRIBED PLANS FOR TELEVISED DEBATES BETWEEN THE PRESIDENT AND GOVERNOR CARTER. I SAID THAT THE OUTCOME OF THE ELECTION IS FAR FROM CERTAIN, AND, AT PRESENT, IS SPECULATIVE. I ADDED THAT IT IS MY BELIEF THAT NO MATTER WHICH CANDIDATE IS ELECTED AS PRESIDENT, HE WILL CONTINUE TO PURSUE A POLICY OF IMPROVEMENT OF RELATIONS WITH THE USSR AND AGREEMENT ON ARMS CONTROL. ABRASIMOV SAID THAT CARTER HAD MADE SOME STATEMENTS SUGGESTING A HARDER POLICY TOWARD THE SOVIET UNION. THE RECORD OF PRESIDENT FORD IS KNOWN, AND DESPITE THE RECENT HARDENING OF US POLICY, HIS RECORD IS A GOOD ONE.

CHINA

5. ABRASIMOV ASKED FOR MY VIEWS ON EVENTS IN CHINA, NOTING CONFIDENTIAL

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THAT I HAD TALKED WITH THE CHINESE AMBASSADOR TO THE GDR. I SUGGESTED THAT HE COULD GIVE AN EVALUATION, CONSIDERING THAT THE SOVIET UNION HAD A LONG RELATIONSHIP WITH THE PRC AND BECAUSE OF HIS SERVICE IN CHINA. HE RESPONDED THAT HE HAD SPENT A YEAR IN CHINA.

6. ABRASIMOV THEN REMARKED THAT SOME PEOPLE IN THE US DO NOT WANT TO SEE AN IMPROVEMENT OF SINO-SOVIET RELATIONS.

IT IS IMPOLITE TO SPEAK ILL OF THE DEAD, BUT MAO'S VIEWS ON US/SOVIET RELATIONS WERE CONTAINED IN A MAO EPIGRAM WHICH HE QUOTED: "" MAO WOULD LIKE TO SIT ON A HILL AND WATCH TWO TIGERS FIGHT"--. THE SOVIET UNION AND THE UNITED STATES. I TOLD ABRASIMOV THAT WHATEVER OCCURRED IN THE PRC IT APPEARED TO ME THAT THE US AND THE SOVIET UNION HAD THE CAPABILITY OF DETERMINING THE QUALITY OF THEIR RELATIONS, TO WHICH HE AGREED.

US/GDR RELATIONS

7. ABRASIMOV SAID THE GDR LEADERS HAD TOLD HIM THEY CONSIDER THIS EMBASSY'S WORK TO BE A POSITIVE CONTRIBUTION TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF BILATERAL RELATIONS. CONTINUING, HE SAID US POLICY TOWARD THE GDR IS HEAVILY INFLUENCED BY WEST GERMANY, BUT THAT HE THOUGH MODEST PROGRESS HAD BEEN MADE. HE SAID US/GDR TRADE HAD GROWN RAPIDLY, BUT AS A CONSEQUENCE OF LARGE US EXPORTS TO THE GDR WERE ABOUT 200 MILLION RUBLES, AND GDR EXPORTS ONLY 30 MILLION RUBLES. HE HAS THE IMPRESSION THERE ARE MANY POSSIBILITIES FOR INCREASED TRADE.

8. I SAID, LIKE THE SOVIET UNION, WE HAVE ALLIES, THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC IS A CLOSE ONE, BUT US POLICY TOWARD THE GDR IS DETERMINED BY THE US. I THEN DISCUSSED SOME OF THE DIFFICULTIES INVOLVED IN COMING TO A PRECISE UNDERSTANDING OF THE VOLUME OF US/GDR TRADE, SUCH AS THE ROLE OF US SUBSIDIARIES IN EUROPE, AND TRANSHIPMENT OF GRAIN BY THE PRIVATE TRADE.

GDR ECONOMY

9. I ASKED ABRASIMOV FOR HIS ASSESSMENT OF THE GDR
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ECONOMIC SITUATION. ABRASIMOV BEGAN BY COMMENTING THAT IN CONTRAST TO MANY OTHER COUNTRIES, THE GDR HAS ALMOST NO RAW MATERIALS, AND MUST IMPORT FROM ABROAD, INCLUDING LARGE IMPORTS FROM THE SOVIET UNION. ABRASIMOV SAID SOVIET/GDR FOREIGN TRADE IN 1975 AMOUNTED TO 5,050 MILLION RUBLES, AND WAS APPROXIMATELY BALANCED. 70 PERCENT OF THE SOVIET UNION'S EXPORTS TO THE GDR CONSIST OF RAW MATERIALS, AND 30 PERCENT ARE MANUFACTURED GOODS. THE USSR FORMERLY SOLD OIL TO THE GDR FOR 19 RUBLES PER TON. NOW THAT SUCH PETROLEUM MUST BE TRANSPORTED 4,000 KILOMETERS FROM SIBERIA, RATHER THAN AS IN THE PAST FROM EUROPEAN RUSSIA, IT WAS NECESSARY TO RAISE THE PRICE. HOWEVER, PRICES OF THE GDR'S MANUFACTURED GOODS HAVE ALSO BEEN RAISED. AS AN EXAMPLE, THE PRICE OBTAINED BY THE GDR FOR SHIPS SOLD TO THE USSR HAS BEEN RAISED

20-30PERCENT. THE RESULT IS THAT ON SEPTEMBER 1 THE GDR ACHIEVED A POSITIVE BALANCE IN TRADE WITH THE USSR.

10. ABRASIMOV STATED THE GDR GROWS ENOUGH GRAIN TO FEED ITSELF EASILY. BUT IS HIGHLY DEVELOPED LIVESTOCK ECONOMY, WHILE PERMITTINGTHE EXPORT OF LARGE QUNATITIES OF MEAT, INCLUDING 220,000 TONS TO WEST GERMANY. REQUIRES THE IMPORT OF FEED. WITH 75 CATTLE PER 100 HECTARES, ABRASIMOV SAID, THE GDR HAS MORE CATTLE IN RELATION TO ITS SIZE THAN THE US.

US/SOVIET TRADE

11. ABRASIMOV SAID THAT US/SOVIET TRADE IS SMALL IN RELATION TO ITS POTENTIAL. THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC IS THE SOVIET UNION'S LARGEST WESTERN TRADING PARTNERAND TRADE WITH " LITTLE FINLAND" ISMANY TIMES LARGER THAN US/SOVIET TRADE. I ASKED HIM HOW US/SOVIET TRADE IN GRAIN AND OIL WAS PROCEEDING. HE SAID THE USSRIS BUYING THE FIVE MILLION(SIC) TONS OF WHAT IT WAS " FORCED" TO AGREE TO IN A BAD CROP YEAR. AS FOR PETROLEUM, THE SOVIET UNION IS MAKING DELIVERIES AND WOULD DELIVER MORE, EXCEPT THAT THE US US IS NOT INTERESTED.

12. ENDING MY VISIT , I TOLD ABRASIMOV THAT AT THIS TIME OF CURRENT SOVIET-US NEGOTIATIIONS RESTRAINT AND CONFIDENTIAL

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CALMNESS ARE NEEDED. ABRASIMOV AGREED WITH THIS STATEMENT.

OBSERVATIONS ON AMBASSADOR ABRASIVOV

13. IN ADDITION TO OUR CALLS ON EACH OTHER, AMBASSADOR ABRASIMOV AND HIS WIFE HAVE VISITED AT THE US RESIDENCE, AND WE HAVE VISITED THEM AT THE SOVIET CHANCERY/RESIDENCE. ALWAYS ONE OFFICIAL OF EACH OF OUR EMBASSIES HAS BEEN PRESENT. MRS. ABRASIMOV IS A DIGNIFIED AND CHARMING WOMAN. AMBASSADOR ABRASIMOV IS OBVIOUSLY VERY INTELLIGENT AND INFORMED (NOT TOO WELL ABOUT THE US SYSTEM BUT HE IS TRYING TO LEARN). HE IS NEAT, WELL DRESSED AND HANDSOME IN APPEARANCE. HIS DEIGNITY AND PERSONALIY CONTRIBUTE TO A STRONG, OVERALL IMPRESSIN OF AUTHORITY. THE AMBASSADOR OF HUNGARY, DR. MATYAS SZUROS, HAS SAID TO ME, " WITH HIS AUTHORITY HE IS THE PERFECT SOVIET AMBASSADOR TO THE GDR."

14. WHILE GENERALLY A CALM PERSON, HE DOES LOSE HIS TEMPER, BUT RECOVERS QUICKLY AS HE DID WITH ME ON AN EARLIER OCCASION DURING MY COMMENTS ON ANGOLA AND AS HE TALKED ABOUT FRG " VIOLATIONS" OF THE QA. I HAVE

TOLD HIM THAT HIS SUBJECT WAS NOT IN MY COMPETENCE,
BUT I HAVE LISTENED TO HIM.

15. HE SPEAKS ALWAYS OF THE IMPORTANCE OF GOOD US/
SOVIET RELATIONS, CONSIDERING HIMSELF SOMETHING OF
AN AUTHORITY ON NUCLEAR ARMS AND THE SALT NEGOTIATIONS.
HE NEVER LOSES A CHANCE TO INQUIRE ABOUT US/PRC
RELATIONS.
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